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A-ONE Online Magazine
Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

Fred Horvat

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~ Digging Atari's Past! ~ Best PS 4 Games So Far ~ Tablet for Under \$40!

-* Italy Revises "Google Tax"! *-
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-* White House Review Panel on NSA Programs! *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard

"Saying it like it is!"

As you're likely aware, it's a very hectic time of the year. If you're not out dodging the snow and having to clean it all up like we have been a few times recently, then you're probably trying to finish up your holiday shopping. Well, the snow from the recent couple of storms has been cleaned up here, and our shopping is essentially complete. It is nice to be able to say we're done shopping, and quite early, for a change!

So, we'll let you get on with your holiday preparations, and then rest up and then enjoy another week's issue! All of us here at A-ONE wish all of our readers a happy holiday season - stay safe!

Until next year!

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - 5 Best Wii U and 3DS Games So Far!

5 Best Xbox One Games So Far!
Digging for Atari's Long-Lost ET Carts!
And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

These Are The 5 Best Wii U and 3DS Games So Far

We have chronicled the sad tale of the Wii U ever since it launched last year. Nintendo failed to get the word out, and in turn the public failed to show any interest. Some consumers didn't even understand what the Wii U was, and it's hard to blame them. Things still aren't looking any better for the king of the last generation, especially now that Microsoft and Sony have both re-entered the market with hardware that blows away

anything the Wii U has to offer. The one thing the Wii U does have over the PS4 and Xbox One this holiday season is a year long head start, which means a much wider and better selection of games to purchase.

In this feature, BGR has done its best to comb through the lineup to find the crown jewels of Nintendo's newest console, the games you should pick up over the holidays for your Wii U. Here are the best Wii U games money can buy so far. We've included a couple of our favorite 3DS games as well.

Super Mario 3D World

This is it. The best next-gen game so far. Putting Nintendo's business woes aside for the moment, they still employ a stable of some of the most talented, creative developers in the industry, and *Super Mario 3D World* shines as a result. Nintendo took a break from the 3D branch of Mario games to focus on flatter titles for the past few years, which make 3D World all the more welcome.

In our review of 3D World, we made an audacious claim: Come November 22nd, the best game on any next-gen console will be *Super Mario 3D World*, and Nintendo might finally stand a chance to compete. A month after the game's release, there's no doubt in my mind that Mario has stolen the spotlight for the holiday season. Not only is 3D World a great game, it could work wonders with the holiday crowd. Pile the kids in front of the television with some Wiimotes and they'll be entertained for hours. And don't be ashamed to jump in yourself.

The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker HD

My favorite game in the *Zelda* series has a fresh coat of paint on the Wii U, and if you've never worked your way through *Wind Waker*, this should be your top priority when you have downtime over the holidays. *Wind Waker* was a worrisome concept when it first appeared. Rather than maturing Link, Nintendo had turned him into a full-on cartoon, and fans of the series did not respond positively. Ten years later, it is fondly remembered as the revitalization of the character.

It's worth noting that *Wind Waker HD* is not a new game, simply a high-definition upgrade of a Gamecube game, but the few additions that Nintendo did make are welcome ones. Sailing across the Great Sea from island to island was joyous in the original game, but became tedious as Link was forced to backtrack to locations he'd already visited. Easing the pain a bit, *Wind Waker HD* introduces a method of upgrading your ship's speed. Other changes include messages from other players washing up on the shore, the inventory screen being relegated to the GamePad and off-TV play.

Wind Waker is a fascinating adventure, one that shouldn't be missed. The Wii U first-party lineup is almost as stark as the lineups of the PS4 and Xbox One, but gems like these make the Wii U a console worth owning.

Rayman Legends

Not long ago, before first-person shooters claimed the throne, platformers were all the rage. Nintendo had Mario, Sony had Jak, Ratchet and Sly, Sega had Sonic and Ubisoft had Rayman. Sadly, Rayman was never given the same attention as his competition. He was even slowly pushed out of the Raving Rabbids series after the titular rabbits began to overshadow the limbless hero. That all changed in 2011 with the release

of Rayman Origins, one of the best reviewed platformers in recent memory.

Two years later, we finally have our sequel, and it's everything a follow-up to Origins should be. Rayman Legends picks up right where its predecessor left off, dumping Rayman and his odd companions in some of the most skillfully crafted, gorgeously animated worlds on any console. In terms of visuals, Legends even trumps Super Mario 3D World. Multiplayer is also a ton of fun, if you can stand the chaos.

Rayman Legends is not a Nintendo exclusive, despite Ubisoft's original intentions. The game is available for the PS3 and the Xbox 360 as well, but the Wii U is home to the definitive Legends experience. Legends is also coming to the PS4 and Xbox One next year, but if you're looking to get your hands on another great family game for the holidays, take a chance and pick up Legends for the Wii U.

The Legend of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds

Two games from the same series on a list of five might seem like overkill, but this is Zelda we're talking about, one of the staple franchises of Nintendo's storied history. In some ways, much like Wind Waker HD, A Link Between Worlds is also an HD update. Link is placed in the same world featured in A Link to the Past with most of the same tools at his disposal, but the dungeons are all new, item acquisition has been streamlined, and the power to morph into a painting adds far more to the experience than you would expect.

One thing we failed to cover in our review is just how useful the 3D feature is in A Link Between Worlds. The top-down view of the increasingly dangerous worlds of Hyrule and Lorule is aided greatly by an added dimension, and it helps distract from the mildly unattractive graphical redesign of the character models. Many of you are bound to be traveling over the holidays—pop Zelda into your 3DS and you'll be home in no time.

There are so many secrets to discover and locations to explore, you'll find yourself coming back to A Link Between Worlds ever after you've finished the main story. After the credits rolled, I realized that a fourth of my inventory was still empty. I haven't filled it quite yet, but I plan to cap it off before the end of the year. A Link Between Worlds is the best 3DS game yet, and a must-have for anyone who owns the portable console.

Pokemon X & Y

The Pokemon series has been due for an overhaul for years, and the latest release is everything fans have been waiting for and more. As an adult, I figured that Pokemon would have lost its charm, and although it doesn't have its claws in me quite like it did fifteen years ago, there is something enigmatic about catching hundreds of these ridiculous little creatures.

Pokemon X and Y are the first games of the series to feature polygonal 3D graphics, livening up the world a bit from previous entries. Characters and the Pokemon that they battle with actually look substantial for the very first time. Fans of the franchise would likely be content with the visual upgrade alone, but Mega evolutions, Sky Battles and Horde Encounters spice up the action even further.

At the end of the day, it's another Pokemon game, but what else would a

Pokemon fan want from Game Freak and Nintendo?

These Are The 5 Best Xbox One Games So Far

Over the past few months, we've spent a great deal of time discussing the PlayStation 4 and the Xbox One. Both consoles offer a unique take on the next generation of gaming: the PlayStation 4 is a streamlined, lightning fast device that lacks some very basic media functionality, while the Xbox One is a mostly successful all-in-one media center replacement that still needs some polishing to capitalize on its potential.

Although BGR settled on the PlayStation 4 as the better of the two consoles so far, both boxes would be little more than paperweights without a decent game lineup. Unfortunately, console launches aren't historically paired with great games. Developers haven't had much time to learn the ins and outs of the hardware, and many are still hard at work on games for the last generation consoles.

In this feature, BGR has done its best to comb through the stark lineup to find the diamonds in the rough, the games you should pick up over the holidays for your brand new Xbox One. Here are the five best Xbox One games money can buy so far.

Dead Rising 3

Dead Rising 3 is my second-favorite console exclusive of the holiday season, and it's also the most full-featured release on either the PS4 or the Xbox One so far. If you're a fan of the series, you might be a bit taken aback when you see just how radically Capcom has changed the formula. First off, the countdown timer has been removed from the primary difficulty of the game. Individual missions are still timed, but Dead Rising 3 gives you more freedom to explore its world than the previous titles ever did.

And that's the best part of this game. Most launch titles are understandably constrained. Developers would rather release a solid, tight product than an ambitious one that doesn't hit the mark. Capcom managed to do both. Dead Rising 3 is mechanically sound and impressively huge. Every stretch of road is littered with dozens of unique weapons, many of which can be combined with other items to form some of the most ridiculous combinations in the history of weapon crafting systems.

The tone is a little off, and moving around the world can be tedious without the right equipment, but Dead Rising 3 is a great evolution of a series that has lacked accessibility in the past. If you have an Xbox One and you're only picking up a single game, this is my recommendation.

Forza Motorsport 5

There are two racing games now available for the Xbox One, and they both also happen to be the only two racing games that made it in time for launch. Forza has been a staple of the Xbox since 2005, and although Forza Motorsport 5 is a back-to-basics car simulator (as opposed to the open-world Forza Horizon from 2012), the game has plenty to offer fans of the series and newcomers alike.

One aspect of the game that has been universally panned is the

microtransaction system that Turn 10 has shoehorned into the game, impeding your progress and forcing you to spend more money on top of the price of the game to progress at a faster rate.

Peggle 2

Both Microsoft and Sony exhausted their next-gen lineups at launch. Every PS4 game you can play before 2014 was released on or around November 15th. The same can be said of the Xbox One, save for a single downloadable title that Microsoft saved for December: Peggle 2. The original Peggle was a phenomenon in the same vein as Angry Birds or Candy Crush Saga, but without any of the negative associations that those games have acquired over the years.

Peggle 2 is the long-awaited sequel, although when a game is basically just a pachinko simulator, there's not much room to improve upon the formula. So Popcap stuck to their guns and released a game that is nearly identical to the first. There are a new host of companions offering a new set of powerups, but you will still spend your time dropping a ball into a field of pegs and then praying to all that is holy that your last ball will hit that final peg, because you are not going to replay this level for the fifteenth time today.

OK, maybe you'll give it another go. But this is the last time!

Zoo Tycoon

Now, wait a minute. I know what you're thinking. Zoo Tycoon sounds like the title of a game that might have been developed for the sole purpose of appealing to a younger audience. Kids love cute animals, therefore they'll ask their parents to buy any old garbage with the word *zoo* in it. That might be the case, but Zoo Tycoon is much more than a \$60 diversion.

Frontier Developers has combined two of their most popular titles, RollerCoaster Tycoon 3 and Kinectimals, to turn what could have been a niche product into a game that the whole family can enjoy. Building a zoo is simple and exhibits click into place without much effort. If the strategy and management of running a zoo is something you'd rather not dedicate your time to, there's a separate mode that allows you to build your zoo without money constraints.

Overall, it's a bit simplistic compared to some of its simulation ancestors, but with the inclusion of some fun social elements and the most interesting use of the Kinect of any game in the launch window, Zoo Tycoon is a bright, colorful antithesis to the guns and zombies that populate other Xbox One titles.

Call of Duty Ghosts

I'll admit, I had my doubts about Ghosts. The series has always been hit-or-miss for me, and it didn't look like the latest rebranding would bring anything new to the series. And for the most part, it didn't, but I found myself enjoying the game regardless.

The campaign doesn't break any new ground. America is once again attacked by a mysterious terrorist cell and your team of highly trained soldiers are tasked with rendering justice on the attackers. But this time you go into space.

Despite some solid performances and an ending that rivals the likes of Modern Warfare 2, the formula continues to grow tired. All in all, it's an adequate addition to a game with much more to offer to its multiplayer fanbase.

The two primary draws of Call of Duty: Ghosts are the ubiquitous online multiplayer and the revamped Extinction mode. If you're at all familiar with Call of Duty multiplayer, you won't find many surprises in Ghosts, but after playing every next-gen shooter on the market, there's no denying that Infinity Ward still knows how to dangle that carrot just far enough from the players to keep them coming back for more.

Extinction is also a welcome surprise. In this mode, aliens take the place of the zombies that have appeared in the past few titles, and players have to destroy alien hives while fighting off the speedy extraterrestrials and completing challenges.

It's easy to be cynical about Call of Duty, and Ghosts is arguably a step back from Black Ops II, but if you're a fan of the series, there's a whole lot to like about the latest entry.

These Are The 5 Best PlayStation 4 Games So Far

There's no way around it—the PlayStation 4 is at a disadvantage when it comes to launch lineups. Microsoft went all out on November 22nd, filling the shelves with exclusives and multiplatform titles alike. Sony's paltry offering consisted of just three PS4-only games, which might not be as worrisome if either the two games actually available at retail were earth-shatteringly impressive.

But that is not the case. One is a great multiplayer shooter with a muddled campaign and the other is a repetitive platformer with a forgettable mascot. Don't fret though, PlayStation 4 owners, there are still a few games to stock your shelves with over the holidays, and some are even worth playing.

In this feature, BGR has done its best to comb through the stark lineup to find the diamonds in the rough, the games you should pick up over the holidays for your brand new PlayStation 4. Here are the five best PS4 games money can buy so far.

Resogun Guide

I never would have guessed that what amounts to a digital pack-in title would be the best exclusive on the PlayStation 4, but for better or worse, that does seem to be the case. Resogun is not a complex game in the vein of Super Stardust HD, Housemarque's last PlayStation-exclusive space shooter, the visuals and the simplicity are what give Resogun its charm. Each level has a continuous wave of enemies with which you must do battle while simultaneously rescuing tiny green humans from their suffocatingly small cages.

The gimmick of Resogun is that the levels wrap around 360 degrees. Flying in either direction gives the impression that the level is spinning on an axis. It also gives you the ability to see what's happening on the opposite side of the level while you're fighting off aliens in the foreground. There are a few different ships to choose from, each with

different abilities that can be upgraded by picking up powerups, as is to be expected from a game like this.

I'm sure the spell will break within the next couple of years, but as with nearly every game on both the PS4 and Xbox One, Resogun is stunning. The core of every level serves as the background, and as you battle with the enemy forces, the buildings collapse into a shower voxels behind your ship. It's more than just the graphical power of the hardware; Housemarque knows how to craft a beautiful aesthetic. If you own a PlayStation 4, you deserve to download Resogun.

Killzone Shadow Fall

It's no surprise that both Xbox One and PS4 fans already have a few shooters to choose from this month, but only one is doing anything different than its competitors. Killzone: Shadow Fall is a deeply flawed game with a hit-or-miss campaign that culminates in quite possibly the dumbest ending I've ever been unfortunate enough to witness, but the multiplayer almost makes up for what is admittedly an uneven package.

Although BGR's review of Shadow Fall was less than enthusiastic, there were plenty of other critics who were able to look past the rough edges and find an enjoyable, noteworthy FPS, which can be hard to find amid the sea of modern day military shooters that flood the market every three months. And although the multiplayer lacks the obsessive-compulsive leveling system of other titles, Killzone's ever-evolving Warzone mode is more engaging than any individual mode in Call of Duty: Ghosts or Battlefield 4.

Do a little bit of research, maybe watch some streamers on the PS4 Twitch app before you take the plunge, but if you're looking for a shooter that tries to shake things up rather than dumbing them down, Killzone: Shadow Fall is worth a look.

Battlefield 4

Battlefield 4 is the latest addition to one of the most popular FPS series in the history of the genre. DICE brought the series to consoles years ago with Battlefield 2: Modern Combat, but the franchise made its biggest impression yet in 2011 with the release of Battlefield 3. Two years later, Battlefield 4 is out for both the last-gen and the next-gen systems, and for my money, it's the best next-gen shooter so far.

In a genre where Call of Duty has reigned supreme for far too long, Battlefield feels like a genuine evolution of the formula. Multiplayer matches play out across enormous, expansive environments, filled with land, sea and air vehicles to maneuver. Vehicles have always been a staple of the franchise, but after spending years with Call of Duty's infantry-only online battles, it's hard to imagine going back.

That's not to say there aren't issues. Much like Killzone, Battlefield 4 subjects you to a terribly boring campaign filled with unlikable characters working their way through unlikely circumstances. It's also been widely reported that the game suffers from regular crashes, a rarity for any console release, much less from a publisher as monolithic as EA. As with every shooter on the PS4 and Xbox One, Battlefield 4 is worth it for the multiplayer alone, but this might be the best multiplayer of all.

Need for Speed Rivals

Need for Speed: Most Wanted was one of the games I spent the most time with last generation, so Rivals was near the top of the list of games I couldn't wait to get my hands on with the new console launches.

At first glance, Need for Speed: Rivals looks like a greatest hits collection of some of the most popular Need for Speed titles, and not in a good way. The huge open world of Most Wanted is in tact, but it feels far more claustrophobic than before. The high-speed police chases of Hot Pursuit are still exciting, but without a reliable matchmaking system, you'll spend almost all of your time shunting AI racers rather than fellow human players.

For those expecting a direct follow-up to any of the previous titles in the series (as I was), it's important to realize that the team at Ghost Games took a different approach entirely. The mission structure is much more linear, cars unlock in sequence, and every session is a multiplayer session as long as you are connected to the Internet. It's worth noting that Rivals inexplicably features the most insane, baffling, poorly-acted story I can remember seeing in a video game in recent memory. It's frightening at first, but it takes on a so bad it's good quality within the first hour or so that immediately qualifies it for MST3K-style group sessions.

As a PS4 owner, you don't have many options in the racing game department. Driveclub has been delayed into 2014 and Forza Motorsport 5 is an Xbox One exclusive. Rivals takes some warming up to, but once you click with it, you'll start having a lot of fun.

Flower

After including Peggle on the list of best Xbox One games, I couldn't rightfully exclude the higher-definition update of one of my favorite PlayStation 3 games from this list. If you've never played Flower, the game has a very simple premise: take control of the wind and fly from flower to flower, collecting petals along the way. When you first pick Flower up, it feels like a gorgeous tech demo; a way for Sony to show off the DualShock motion controls. As you progress, a story slowly unfolds, giving meaning to your actions.

Flower is as much a game as it is an audiovisual experience. The music is absolutely stunning, as are the environments. I find myself coming back to this game fairly regularly just to look at it again, despite its brevity.

If you somehow missed out on Flower the first time around, consider yourself lucky. This is the definitive version of Thatgamecompany's first game designed for consoles, and with an entry fee as low as free, you won't be losing anything for giving it a shot.

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Xbox Live Documentary Goes Digging for Atari's Long-Lost E.T. Cartridges

One of the weirdest videogame urban legends out there goes like this: In the early 1980s, Atari found itself with millions of unsold copies of the videogame adaptation of *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* it created for the Atari 2600 console. With no idea what else to do, the legend goes, Atari buried them in a small town in New Mexico. No one seems to know exactly what happened, but next year a documentary film crew plans to finally unearth the story for a film that will premiere in the most ironic, yet oddly apropos place: Xbox.

As part of a deal, announced today, between Xbox Entertainment Studios and producers Simon Chinn and Jonathan Chinn, the as-yet-untitled documentary will be released through Xbox Live on the 360 and new Xbox One sometime in 2014. The doc, the first in a series of films the producers will make for Xbox, will be directed by Zak Penn creator of Syfy's *Alphas* and present the backstory of the mysterious cartridge burial the history of Atari. It will also follow multimedia studio Fuel Entertainment as they excavate the 100-acre landfill in Alamogordo, New Mexico where the videogames are rumored to have been dumped.

When Simon and Jonathan Chinn approached me about this story, I knew it would be something important and fascinating, Penn said in a statement.

I wasn't expecting to be handed the opportunity to uncover one of the most controversial mysteries of gaming lore.

That particular piece of lore dates to 1983, when Atari found itself with boatloads of unwanted copies of a reviled game and again, according to legend opted to simply bury them. The truthiness of the story has always been questioned, but a man named Ben King, who grew up in Alamogordo, told ABC News earlier this year, I was maybe around 8 or 10 years old when this happened, and I remember when they did it I remember people going out there to dig up the site to get the games. To stop them, they [the city] placed concrete over them.

The announcement of the new documentary series of which the Atari mystery will be a part comes about seven months after the Microsoft-run Xbox Entertainment Studios announced its first piece of exclusive original programming a live-action *Halo* series being produced by Steven Spielberg. At the time, XES president Nancy Tellem said, TV on the Xbox One will immerse you, allowing you to virtually jump into the action. For the documentary series, she said, Jonathan and Simon Chinn would focus on the impact of technology on our lives.

Simon Chinn, who produced the Oscar-winning documentaries *Man on Wire* and *Searching for Sugar Man*, said doing a series for Xbox offered the chance to make a unique series of films around the extraordinary events and characters that have given rise to the digital age. The announcement of Simon and Jonathan Chinn's arrangement with Xbox comes the same day the pair, who are cousins, announced the launch of a multi-platform company called Lightbox, which will handle production of the documentaries for Xbox.

They are consummate storytellers and they plan to match their creative sensibility with the best talent in the industry, Tellem said in a statement. These stories will expose how the digital revolution created a global democracy of information, entertainment and commerce, and how it impacts our lives every day.

Filming on the Atari cartridge documentary is slated to begin next month and will be available on Xbox One and Xbox 360 sometime in 2014.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Task Force Urges Limit on NSA Snooping

A presidential advisory panel has recommended sweeping limits on the government's surveillance programs, including requiring a court to sign off on individual searches of phone records and stripping the National Security Agency of its ability to store that data from Americans.

It was unclear how the changes, if enacted, would impact the scope of the vast government surveillance programs. While President Barack Obama ordered the review board to submit recommendations following government spying disclosures earlier this year, he is under no obligation to accept the proposals.

The White House authorized the release of the review group's report Wednesday, weeks ahead of schedule. The president was also conducting an internal review of the government's surveillance programs and planned to announce his decisions in January.

The review board's proposals address the government's ability to collect intelligence both in the United States and overseas.

The recommendations include tightening federal law enforcement's use of so-called national security letters, which give the government sweeping authority to demand financial and phone records without prior court approval in national security cases. The task force recommended that authorities should be required to obtain a prior "judicial finding" showing "reasonable grounds" that the information sought is relevant to terrorism or other intelligence activities.

In addition, the panel proposed terminating the NSA's ability to store telephone data and instead require it to be held by the phone companies or a third party. Access to the data would then be permitted only through an order from a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court.

"With regard to the bulk metadata of phone calls, we think there should be judicial review before that information is accessed and we don't think the government should retain it," said Richard Clarke, a member of the five-person panel.

If both recommendations were enacted, it's likely they would slow down the intelligence collection process. The panel recommendations do allow for exceptions "in emergencies," leaving open the possibility of intelligence agencies scanning the information quickly and asking for permission later if they suspect imminent attack.

Although the task force did not recommend ending any of the NSA's daily sweeps of telephone and Internet data, as some critics urged, a senior lawyer for one influential privacy advocate group said the review group's recommendations would amount to "sweeping" changes in government policy if Obama accepts them in bulk.

The recommendations "will fuel the NSA reform effort both within the administration and in Congress," said Greg Nojeim, senior counsel with the Center for Democracy and Technology.

The panel also tackled the diplomatic furor over NSA spying on the leaders of allied nations, including Germany. The group recommended that the president personally approve such spying and that the decisions be based in part on whether the United States shares "fundamental values and interests" with the leaders of those nations.

"Just because we can doesn't mean we should," Clarke said.

The panel's other recommendations include:

Guidelines for establishing reciprocal nonspying agreements with the United States

Creation of a civil liberties policy official in the White House and at the Office of Management and Budget.

Changes to the vetting process for those trying to obtain security clearances, including requiring that the vetting process be ongoing for those accessing classified information.

Panel members said they did not think any of the recommendations would harm U.S. national security.

"We are not in any way recommending the disarming of the intelligence community," said Michael Morell, a task force member and former deputy director of the CIA. "We're not saying struggle against terrorism is over."

White House Review Panel Proposes Curbs on Some NSA Programs

A White House-appointed panel on Wednesday proposed curbs on some key National Security Agency surveillance operations, recommending limits on a program to collect records of billions of telephone calls and new tests before Washington spies on foreign leaders.

Among the panel's proposals, made in the wake of revelations by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden, the most contentious may be its recommendation that the eavesdropping agency halt collection of the phone call records, known as "metadata."

Instead, it said, those records should be held by telecommunications providers or a private third party. In a further limitation, the U.S. government would need an order from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to search the data.

"We don't see the need for the government to be retaining that data," said

Richard Clarke, a member of the panel and a former White House counterterrorism advisor.

Across U.S. surveillance programs more broadly, "we tend to believe there should be further judicial oversight than there has been," Clarke said.

It remains to be seen, however, how many of the panel's 46 recommendations will be accepted by President Barack Obama and the U.S. Congress. The panel's five members met with Obama at the White House on Wednesday.

NSA officials have staunchly defended the bulk metadata program, saying it is essential to "connect the dots" between terrorist plotters overseas and co-conspirators inside the United States.

"There is no other way that we know of to connect the dots," Army General Keith Alexander, NSA's director, told a Senate committee last week. "Given that the threat is growing, I believe that is an unacceptable risk to our country."

Michael Morell, a former deputy CIA director who is on the White House review panel, said its members do not believe that its proposals for change "in any way undermine the capabilities of the U.S. intelligence community to collect the information it needs to collect to keep this country safe."

In another major recommendation, the panel proposed five tests it said should be met before Washington conducts surveillance against foreign leaders.

Revelations in documents provided by Snowden that the United States spied on German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff have enraged those countries' citizens.

Brazil on Wednesday awarded a \$4.5 billion contract to Saab AB to replace its aging fleet of fighter jets, after news of U.S. spying on Brazilians helped derail U.S. firm Boeing's chances for the deal.

"The NSA problem ruined it for the Americans," a Brazilian government source said on condition of anonymity.

Before spying on foreign leaders, the panel said, U.S. leaders should determine whether such surveillance is merited by "significant threats" to national security, and whether the nation involved is one "whose leaders we should accord a high degree of respect and deference."

U.S. leaders also should determine whether there is reason to believe the foreign leader has been duplicitous, whether there are other ways to obtain the necessary information, and weigh the negative effects if the surveillance becomes public, the panel said.

It said the U.S. government should explore agreements on spying practices "with a small number of closely allied governments."

Obama said earlier this month in a television interview that he would be "proposing some self-restraint on the NSA" in reforms that the White House has said will be announced in January.

White House press secretary Jay Carney said some of the outside panel's recommendations could be accepted, others studied further, and some rejected.

NSA Debate Shifts in Favor of Surveillance Limits

In a sharp and unexpected shift, the national debate over U.S. government surveillance seems to be turning in favor of reining in the National Security Agency's expansive spying powers at home and abroad.

It's happened suddenly, over a span of just three days. First, a federal judge ruled that the NSA's bulk collection of telephone records was unconstitutional, and then a presidential advisory panel recommended sweeping changes to the agency. Together, the developments are ratcheting up the pressure on President Barack Obama to scale back the controversial surveillance programs.

Even Russian President Vladimir Putin chimed in on Thursday. He said U.S. surveillance efforts are necessary to fight terrorism and "not a cause for repentance," but he, too, said they should be limited by clear rules.

Obama is in no way obligated to make substantial changes. And, countering the public criticism he faces, he hears internal appeals from intelligence officials who insist the collection of phone and Internet data is necessary to protect the U.S. from terror attacks.

But even that argument has been undermined in the course of an extraordinary week. Federal Judge Richard Leon said in a ruling on Monday its effect stayed, pending appeal that even if the phone data collection is constitutional, there is little evidence that it has prevented terror attacks. The intelligence advisory panel, which had access to significant amounts of classified information and counted as a member a former acting director of the CIA, came to the same conclusion in its 300-page report.

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., a fierce critic of the NSA programs, concluded, "What this says to the millions of Americans who have been concerned that the government knows who they called and when they called and for how long, this says it wasn't essential for preventing attacks."

The White House has already rejected one proposal from the task force, which would have allowed for a civilian to head the NSA. While Obama spokesman Jay Carney said Thursday that the president was open to each of the panel's other 45 recommendations, a U.S. official familiar with the deliberations said that Obama rejected a handful of the proposals out of hand when he met with the panel members this week.

The president indicated he was comfortable with about half of the recommendations but thinks some others need further study, according to the official. That official commented only on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to discuss the process by name. Obama is expected to announce his decisions in January.

Congress has been jarred by the new focus on government surveillance. For years, lawmakers had shown little interest in curtailing the programs, but an unusual coalition of conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats has now taken up the issue.

However, Capitol Hill appears stuck over how to proceed. A broad bipartisan coalition in the House is backing legislation that would

prohibit the NSA from collecting hundreds of millions of telephone records every day from U.S. phone companies. But congressional leaders, who have been briefed for years on the classified terrorist-tracking programs, generally support more modest changes to the surveillance systems and have sidelined the House measure.

The chairs of both the House and Senate intelligence committees have also championed more-limited legislation that would call for greater court and congressional oversight of the NSA.

At least before the review group's report, the Obama administration was backing the intelligence committees' bill. However, the review group's recommendations if Obama accepts some of them could change the dynamic once again.

The mere consideration of rolling back the government's vast surveillance powers marks a psychological shift for a nation that was set on edge by the terror attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. President George W. Bush faced little resistance from Congress when he implemented the USA Patriot Act, the law Congress approved that covers the surveillance programs. And opinion polling at the time indicated Americans were broadly willing to give up privacy for the sake of security.

But in the 12 years following the attacks, there has been no comparable large-scale terror incident in the U.S. The public has also learned much more about the government's surveillance activities, most recently in a wave of disclosures from former NSA contractor Edward Snowden.

"The further out we are from 9/11, the more the American public begins to ask the tough questions about the basics of liberties and civil rights," said Anthony Romero, the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union. "The question for the president is whether he gets in front of the reform effort, shapes it, directs it and owns it, or whether he gets dragged along."

NSA supporters worry that curtailing the surveillance programs would leave the country vulnerable to threats.

"Any intelligence collection reforms must be careful to preserve important national security capabilities," said Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Mich., the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee.

Obama who ran for the White House in part on promises to curtail government powers that expanded after Sept. 11 has said he welcomes the public debate. Yet it's all but certain he would not have launched that debate on his own had Snowden not leaked his trove of secret documents.

Snowden's most explosive disclosures focused on the NSA's bulk collections of Americans' phone and internet records. The agency says it does not listen to the content of the calls, nor does it read Internet messages without specific court approval to do so on a case-by-cases basis. It says it does, however, collect and store records of the time and date calls are made, how long they last and the phone numbers that are used.

It was also revealed in recent months that the U.S. was monitoring the communications of friendly foreign leaders, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel. The disclosures incensed allies, and Obama's advisers say they have negatively impacted the president's relations with some world leaders.

Italy Revises 'Google Tax' To Exclude Goods Purchased Online

Italian lawmakers have revised proposed legislation that would raise revenue from online companies including Google and Amazon, but its passage is still uncertain as the leader of the main ruling party said it should be scrapped.

Prime Minister Enrico Letta's government last month proposed the law, dubbed the "Google tax", that would oblige companies that advertise and sell online in Italy to do so only through agencies with a tax presence in the country.

The lower house budget committee late on Tuesday, however, excluded goods bought online from the legislation - also known as the "Web tax" - making the law applicable to advertising only. The measure would become law with the passage of the 2014 budget, due by the end of the year.

The measure was scaled back after Matteo Renzi, the new leader of the Democratic Party (PD), which is the largest in the ruling coalition, said on Tuesday that it should be scrapped.

It would not tax the multinationals directly, but require them to use Italian companies to sell their advertisements rather than doing so through third parties based in low-tax countries such as Luxembourg, Ireland or outside the European Union.

"Web freedom does not mean the freedom not to pay taxes," said lawmaker Francesco Boccia, president of the lower house budget committee, who is considered close to Prime Minister Letta and has pushed hard for the measure.

Since both Boccia and Letta are members of the Democratic Party, which Renzi leads after a landslide victory in a primary vote earlier this month, it still is not clear where exactly the PD stands on the issue.

While opponents of the measure say it would probably violate EU rules, proponents have said it will raise at least 1 billion euros (\$1.37 billion) a year for a country that is struggling to lower its debt, the second-highest in the EU after Greece.

The Senate is expected to cast the final vote on the 2014 budget before Christmas. The lower house is expected to vote by the end of the week on whether to include the "Google tax" in the budget.

Facebook Keeps Track of Every Message You Type Even Ones You Don't Post

Everyone social network user has at some point typed something they knew they'd regret sharing and has promptly erased it before clicking post. However, Slate's Jennifer Golbeck reports that these discarded thoughts don't completely disappear - rather, Facebook uses a code that keeps track of every time you delete a would-be message and sends metadata about that message back to its own data bases.

Just what is Facebook doing with information on these non-posts, you ask?

Golbeck cites a new research paper written by Facebook data scientist Adam Kramer and Carnegie Mellon Ph.D. student Sauvik Das that examines the reasons for Facebook users self-censorship and takes a look at millions of users aborted status updates, posts on other people's timelines, and comments on others' posts.

Facebook isn't keeping a database on all these non-posts' contents, mind you - it's simply keeping a record of all the data surrounding self-censored posts such as what time it was almost posted and whether it was set to be posted on a friend's page or on the user's own page. Kramer and Das say that Facebook wants to understand all the reasons that people decide against posting because the company loses value from the lack of content generation every time a would-be post gets the axe.

Consider, for example, the college student who wants to promote a social event for a special interest group, but does not for fear of spamming his other friends - some of who may, in fact, appreciate his efforts, the authors write in explaining their interest in self-censoring behavior.

Golbeck concludes that Facebook's desire to get users to post absolutely everything that comes into their heads is somewhat perverse because the company is essentially encouraging its users to lower the standards of what they share with their friends.

So Facebook considers your thoughtful discretion about what to post as bad, because it withholds value from Facebook and from other users, she writes. Facebook monitors those unposted thoughts to better understand them, in order to build a system that minimizes this deliberate behavior.

Get Ready for Video Ads in Your Facebook Newsfeed

Your Facebook Newsfeed might soon start to include some new moving ads. Facebook announced today that it would begin rolling out video advertisements in mobile and desktop Newsfeeds.

The company has been testing moving ads for the past few months, but this week it will begin auto-playing video ads - specifically a trailer for the movie "Divergent" - to more users.

"Marketers will be able to use this new format to tell their stories to a large number of people on Facebook in a short amount of time - with high-quality sight, sound and motion. This approach will continue to improve the quality of ads that you see in the Newsfeed," Facebook announced Tuesday.

The ads, Facebook explains, will play on their own without sound. When you tap or click them, they can be played at full screen with sound. If you don't want to view the videos, you can swipe past them.

Facebook began introducing auto-playing videos within its mobile apps a few weeks ago. The videos won't eat into your data plans. Instead, Facebook downloads them in advance when a device is connected to Wi-Fi.

The move comes as Facebook continues to look at ways to improve the advertising experience for businesses and users on the social network. Facebook has introduced tools that allow users to explain why they like

or dislike an ad. Additionally, the company has been working to create higher-quality ads.

Instagram, which is owned by Facebook, also recently began incorporating photo advertisements into users' photo feeds.

Long Live the Desktop! Apple's Made-in-America Mac Pro Arrives

Christmas is a week away, and you might still be scrambling around looking for the perfect gifts. If there's an Apple-obsessed technophile in your life, the newest Mac Pro might be your ticket to winning the holidays. That is, if you have the cash.

Apple CEO Tim Cook announced via tweet Wednesday morning that the Mac Pro has begun rolling off the lines in Austin, Texas. The desktop computer will be available Thursday, Dec. 19, in Apple Stores and on the Apple website, starting at \$2,999.

The Mac Pro's design is a big departure from Mac's previous desktops. It stands at a little less than 10 inches, and its cylindrical shape makes it look more like a futuristic coffee mug than a computer. The machine is also assembled in the U.S., unlike many of Apple's other products, most of which are put together in China.

But buried within the 11-pound machine is top-notch hardware that outclasses not only all other Mac models but most other high-end towers.

The basic Mac Pro comes with the latest quad-core Intel Xeon E5 processor, as well as 12GB of memory and 256GB of storage space. But customers who want a more powerful computer can buy a 6-core processor Mac Pro for \$3,999. Both computers can be customized even more, going up to a 12-core processor, 64 GB of memory and 1 TB of storage space.

Along with both computers' powerful Dual AMD FirePro graphics processors, the new Mac Pros can handle a lot at once - up to three separate 4K displays or six Thunderbolt displays. It certainly is for the power user who demands a lot of horsepower, especially for heavy video or graphic work.

But be forewarned that those displays aren't included in the \$2,999 price tag. The only accessory that the Mac Pro comes with is a power cord. Monitors, speakers and the keyboard and mouse are extra.

Datawind To Sell Tablets in the United States for Less Than \$40

A tablet for less than \$40 seems like the kind of deal reserved for Black Friday or Cyber Monday, but one company is looking to make it available year round. Datawind, a London-based company, is planning to release three different models of Ubislate tablets starting early next year, according to the Wall Street Journal.

Datawind CEO Suneet Singh Tuli said that the new tablets aren't out to compete with the iPad. "Ubislate is primarily intended for students," he told ABC News today in an email. "But it's also for anybody that is left

off the Web because of affordability."

A recent study from the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project estimates that 15 percent of American adults don't use the Internet.

This isn't the company's first attempt at a tablet. Datawind is best known for supplying India's students with its Aakash line of tablets. Tuli added that the company has also expanded outside of India, providing affordable devices to several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The Ubislate 7Ci, the cheapest tablet at \$37.99, uses technology that Apple has since abandoned. The tablet's Cortex A8 processor was last seen in Apple's A4 chip, back with the original iPad and iPhone 4. But anyone who's gotten used to the HD displays may be taken aback by the 7Ci's 800x480 display.

Datawind is also offering a higher-end model with a dual core processor in the Ubislate 3G7, available for \$129.99. Unlike the 7Ci and 7C+ models, the 3G7 can connect to a 3G network in addition to Wi-Fi. The 3G7 also branches into phablet territory, with its ability to make calls. Though it has an improved 1024x600 display, it may still look blurry compared to devices like the iPad mini and Kindle Fire HDX.

Tuli added that what's currently available will get some improvements before they start shipping to the United States. "There are firmware and some other basic upgrades to the entry-level product," he said. "The higher-end devices for the U.S. are bundled with local data plans and cater to the local networks."

News Corp. Acquires Social Media Tool Storyful

News Corp on Friday made its first acquisition as a stand-alone company with the \$25 million purchase of social news tool Storyful.

Founded in 2008 and based in Dublin, Ireland, Storyful verifies and manages the rights holders of news and videos on social media platforms such as Twitter in real time.

"Storyful has become the village square for valuable video, using journalistic sensibility, integrity and creativity to find, authenticate and commercialize user-generated content," News Corp CEO Robert Thomson said in a statement.

The move sheds a bit of light on News Corp's acquisition strategy. Since it separated from its cable, TV and movie sister properties, now known as 21st Century Fox, in July, analysts have been keen to understand how News Corp plans to use its sizable chest of cash of more than \$2 billion.

News Corp said it will operate Storyful as a stand-alone business unit that will continue to maintain partnerships with other news organizations, including the New York Times, Reuters and ABC News.

"We see significant value, especially on the video end, to marry your own video with viral video that is out there," said Raju Narisetti, senior vice president of strategy at News Corp.

Additionally, News Corp plans to extend Storyful's tool to advertisers and marketers so they can verify the social chatter around a brand campaign.

Storyful's management team of Chief Executive Mark Little and Executive Editor David Clinch will continue to oversee operations. Rahul Chopra, senior vice president of video for News Corp, will join Storyful, taking the additional role of chief revenue officer.

Oracle To Buy Responsys for \$1.39 Billion in Cloud Software Push

Oracle Corp, the world's No. 2 business software maker, said it would buy web-based marketing software maker Responsys Inc for about \$1.39 billion to bolster its cloud computing offerings.

Oracle, led by billionaire Larry Ellison, has been focusing on cloud software to fend off competition from nimbler rivals such as Salesforce.com and Workday Inc, which offer web-based products at prices that often undercut Oracle.

Four-decade-old Oracle, which came late to cloud computing, has created sales teams targeting specific cloud competitors and is trying to be a one-stop shop for operating systems, databases and software programs over the Web.

Responsys makes cloud-based software that businesses use to manage their marketing campaigns across e-mail, mobile and the Internet. Its customers include LinkedIn, Southwest Airlines, and United Healthcare.

"(The Responsys acquisition) further expands the company's cloud initiative, which remains a key ingredient to Oracle's recipe for success over the coming years," FBR Capital Markets analysts Daniel Ives said in a note to clients.

The deal comes exactly a year after Oracle said it would buy Eloqua, a maker of cloud-based marketing automation software, for \$810 billion. Earlier this year, Salesforce.com acquired ExactTarget, another marketing software maker, for \$2.5 billion.

Cloud computing, a broad term referring to the delivery of services via the Internet from remote data centers, is a favorite with corporate technology buyers because it is faster to implement and has lower upfront costs than traditional software.

The Responsys deal could also trigger consolidation in the software industry in 2014 as larger firms explore new areas of growth, while smaller vendors continue look at strategic acquisitions.

"In our opinion, this acquisition makes it more likely that NetSuite Inc or SAP AG would acquire Marketo," Ives said, noting that neither have made big acquisitions in digital marketing.

Marketo, which has a market capitalization of \$1.25 billion, also makes marketing software for businesses.

Oracle's offer of \$27 per share represents a premium of about 38 percent to Responsys' Thursday closing. Responsys shares were trading at \$26.94

on the Nasdaq on Friday.

Oracle priced the deal at about \$1.5 billion, net of Responsys' cash.

The deal, which has been approved by the board of directors of Responsys, is expected to close in the first half of 2014.

Oracle shares were down marginally at \$36.65 in midday trading on the New York Stock Exchange. Marketo shares jumped nearly 10 percent.

The Responsys deal, Oracle's seventh acquisition in the year, is also its biggest since it acquired network gear maker Acme Packet for \$1.7 billion in February.

France: It's Not Sexting, It's Textopornographie

France, a nation with a centuries-old reputation for seduction, now has a word for sexting.

If you want to send sexually explicit photos or text messages to your lover in France, it's called "textopornographie." That's the term recently chosen by the Academie Francaise, the respected institution that watches over the French language and regularly invents French terms for English or other expressions that have gone global.

The academy's Sophie Tonolo, a dictionary editor, says it was approached by the Justice Ministry for a proper term for sexting because the phenomenon often comes up in legal cases.

It was one of many words published this month in a government legal database. It may not end up in the dictionary however, Tonolo said, if the phenomenon fades.

People Are Way More Worried About Hackers Than Online Tracking

Nearly every action you take while online is monitored by advertisers, from the products you buy to the links that you click. Ads are tailor-made for each and every user, like a more accurate Pandora, but without the music. Despite all of this, people are still more concerned about hackers accessing their private information than they are about advertisers paying for it.

AllThingsD shares the results of a survey where 75% of respondents say they are worried about the threat of hacking, yet only 54% have the same distress when it comes to advertisers tracking their every move. Only 15% rank government's breach of privacy as their top security concern. What this shows us is that sensationalism trumps common sense.

The threat of being hacked is very real just ask anyone who has ever had to regain access to his or her email account but the seemingly innocuous gathering of information by advertisers is both constant and extremely invasive. It's possible that if the public was better informed about how their information was stored and shared, this survey might have seen very different results.

Bill Gates Sends Secret Santa Gift to Reddit User

While everyone knows the best part of a Secret Santa gift exchange is finding out the identity of the gift giver, a Reddit user participating in this year's online Secret Santa gift giving got the surprise of her life during the big reveal.

The user, identified only as Rachel, posted a list of gifts she hoped to get from her Reddit Secret Santa - makeup, nail polish, "glittery things" and an iPad. But that's not what she got from Microsoft founder Bill Gates.

"I thought Bill sounded like a friendly fellow," Rachel said. "In fact, I had this whole image of this poor guy named Bill trying to navigate my wish list full of makeup, nail polish, glittery things to buy me. Quite frankly, I felt bad for this Bill," Rachel said in a follow-up post on Reddit.

Rachel explained that a package showed up at her house with a card addressed "To Rachel, From Bill." It contained a stuffed cow, a note saying a donation had been made in her name to Heifer International and a large National Geographic book about world travel. She was delighted.

"Still not realizing who was gifting me, I quickly opened ... the gift, which was an amazing and beautiful travel book, 'Journeys of a Lifetime.' I went on and on in my likes and dislikes for my love of travel and seeing the world, and I cannot WAIT to read this. Not only that, but I love pictures and reading up on new places. This gift was perfect!" she wrote.

"I quickly flipped through it, missing the inscription, message and signature from Bill on the first page and headed to the final part of my gift. Once again, To me, From Bill. I opened this and it's a man holding a sign. Oh ... wait," Rachel wrote, describing the moment she realized the identity of her gifter.

"And then it finally hit me. All the presents I just tore open, the charity, then everything - was from Bill GATES.

Rachel said she went back through the gifts and read the inscriptions again, noting that all of the gifts were perfectly tailored to her interests. She found a picture Gates had taken of himself with the stuffed cow and the card made out to her.

"My jaw hit the EVER LOVING FLOOR. I went back to all the other gifts completely shocked. My god. Never in my entire life did I imagine, ever, ever, ever that Bill would get me. I am SO SO thankful for the time, thought and energy he put into my gift, and especially thankful for him overnigting it," she wrote.

At the end of her post, Rachel made sure to add a sly apology for asking for an Apple iPad:

"PS: Sorry for the Apple ipad on my wish list, that was really awkward," she wrote.

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